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REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 20, 22-24, 77-86, 88-90 and 92 are pending. Claim 20 was amended to correct a minor grammatical error. Claims 23 and 88 were amended to correct their dependencies. Claims 1-19, 21, 25-76, 87 and 91 have been canceled without prejudice. Reconsideration of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 20, 22-24, 77-86, 88-90 and 92 were rejected under 35 USC 102(e) as being anticipated by or under 35 USC 103(a) as being obvious over one applicants previous patents, the Anderson et al references. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

The final rejection appears to miss a claimed feature recited in all three independent claims. Claim 20 recites: "...supporting said clamp on an upper portion of the gel staining tank thereby supporting said gel slab ...". Claim 77 recites: "...with portions of said clamp supported on said staining vessel.". Claim 86 recites" "...said gel clamps supported on an upper portion of said tank...".

In all three situations the clamp is supported by the staining tank during part of the claimed method. The previous Anderson et al references have grippers attached to and supported by the robotic arm. Even if one considers the clamp to be obvious from the grippers, the grippers in the references are integral to the robotic arm and therefore are never supported by the top rim of the staining tank.

Furthermore, the claimed clamp is a separate device, which may be picked up, moved and released by a robotic arm in the claimed invention. By contrast Anderson et al does not teach a separate clamp device.

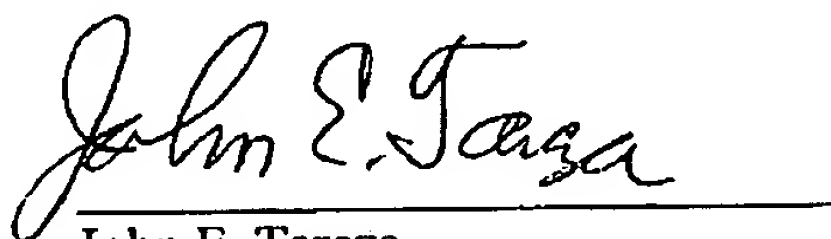
The final rejection mentions the support of the "clamp" at only location, the last two lines on page 3. The final rejection states "... a tank (130) or vessel and supporting the clamp (Fig. 12)." Fig. 12 does not show the tank or vessel at all. Tank (130) does appear in some of the Fig. 11s but these figures lack any clamp. At no point do the Anderson et al specifications teach a clamp (or even a gripper) supported by a vessel. Accordingly, the rejection should be withdrawn.

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In view of the amendments and comments above, the rejections have been overcome. Reconsideration, withdrawal of the rejections and early indication of allowance are respectfully requested. If any issues remain, the examiner is encouraged to call the undersigned for prompt resolution.

If needed, applicants petition for an extension of time under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a) for sufficient time to accept this response. The commissioner hereby is authorized to charge payment of any fees under 37 CFR § 1.17, which may become due in connection with the instant application or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No.500933.

Respectfully submitted,



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Enclosed 2 as extension of time.

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